

BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION

For Fiscal Year 2022

 Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
 RECEIVED: 03/16/2022 3:44:12 PM

Primary Applicant (Name and Address): Starwire Technologies PO BOX 428 Siren, WI 54872	Applications MUST be UPLOADED to ERF via the Commission's website, http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx . Refer to section 2.3 for detailed instructions. Applications are due and MUST be uploaded to ERF no later than: March 17, 2022 at 4:00pm (16:00) Central Time. Late applications will not be accepted.
	Contact for further information: PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov
	Date: December 1, 2021
<p>The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is seeking applications for Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission may award one or more grants during Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private entities that meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504. This grant round will be funded with bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As such, successful applicants are subject to the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants will demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more underserved areas in the State.</p>	
<p>Applicant Certification: In signing this application, the undersigned verifies under penalty of perjury that the Applicant and its employees and agents have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition with respect to this application; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application; that this application has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this application has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the opening of applications to any other applicant or competitor; that all of the responses and representations of Applicant in this application are true and correct to the best of the undersigned's knowledge, information, and belief; and that Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with all of the terms and conditions respecting this application and any award of a broadband expansion grant as may be established in a grant award Agreement.</p>	
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print) Joe Cremin	Title Owner
	Phone 877-679-4242
Signature of Authorized Representative 	Date 3/14/2022

SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name Starwire Technologies	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar) \$800,000 (50%)
Federal Employer Identification No. 20-8504088	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar) \$800,000 (50%)
Contact Name and Title Joe Cremin, Owner	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar) \$1,600,000
Telephone Number 877-679-4242	Project Name Town of Roosevelt
E-mail Address(es) joe@starwire.net	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.) FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other) Last Mile
Grant Manager Contact Name	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the names, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations Starwire Technologies, LLC – Private Partner Town of Roosevelt – Public Partner - 20805 Co Rd H, Barronett, WI 54813 Burnett County – Public Partner - 7410 Co Hwy K, Siren, WI 54872	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences) Starwire will construct a Fiber to the Home (FTTH) network and will build roughly 40 miles of mainline fiber cable to all businesses and residents in the Town of Roosevelt.	
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed 1 Gbps	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed 1 Gbps
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location 100 Mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location 100 Mbps
County or Counties served by this project Burnett County	Community or Communities served by this project Town of Roosevelt
List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve CenturyLink is the only provider in the proposed project area	

<p>Does proposed project serve an <u>unserved</u> area of the State, as defined in Section 1.4 of the application instruction? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes... according to CenturyLink's web site about 10% unserved, but actual reports from residents indicate service does not always maintain a minimum of 5mbps leading us to consider it 80% unserved.</p>	<p>Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no)</p> <p>Not yet, but Burnett County is working on it and is encouraging all towns to join in.</p>
<p>For last mile projects or component the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access). Approx 20</p>	<p>For last mile projects or components the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access). Approx 180</p>
<p>Of the improved business locations, how many locations are <i>unserved</i>? This is a difficult question to answer, see more info in the application.</p>	<p>Of the improved residential locations, how many are <i>unserved</i>? This is a difficult question to answer, see more info in the application.</p>
<p>For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no) No.</p>	<p>Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no)</p> <p>Yes!</p>
<p>Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no)</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no) No</p>
<p>Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2021? (yes/no) Yes!</p>	

FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application

Budget & Income Summary



Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

Grant Summary

Grant Applicant:	Project:
Starwire Technologies	Town of Roosevelt

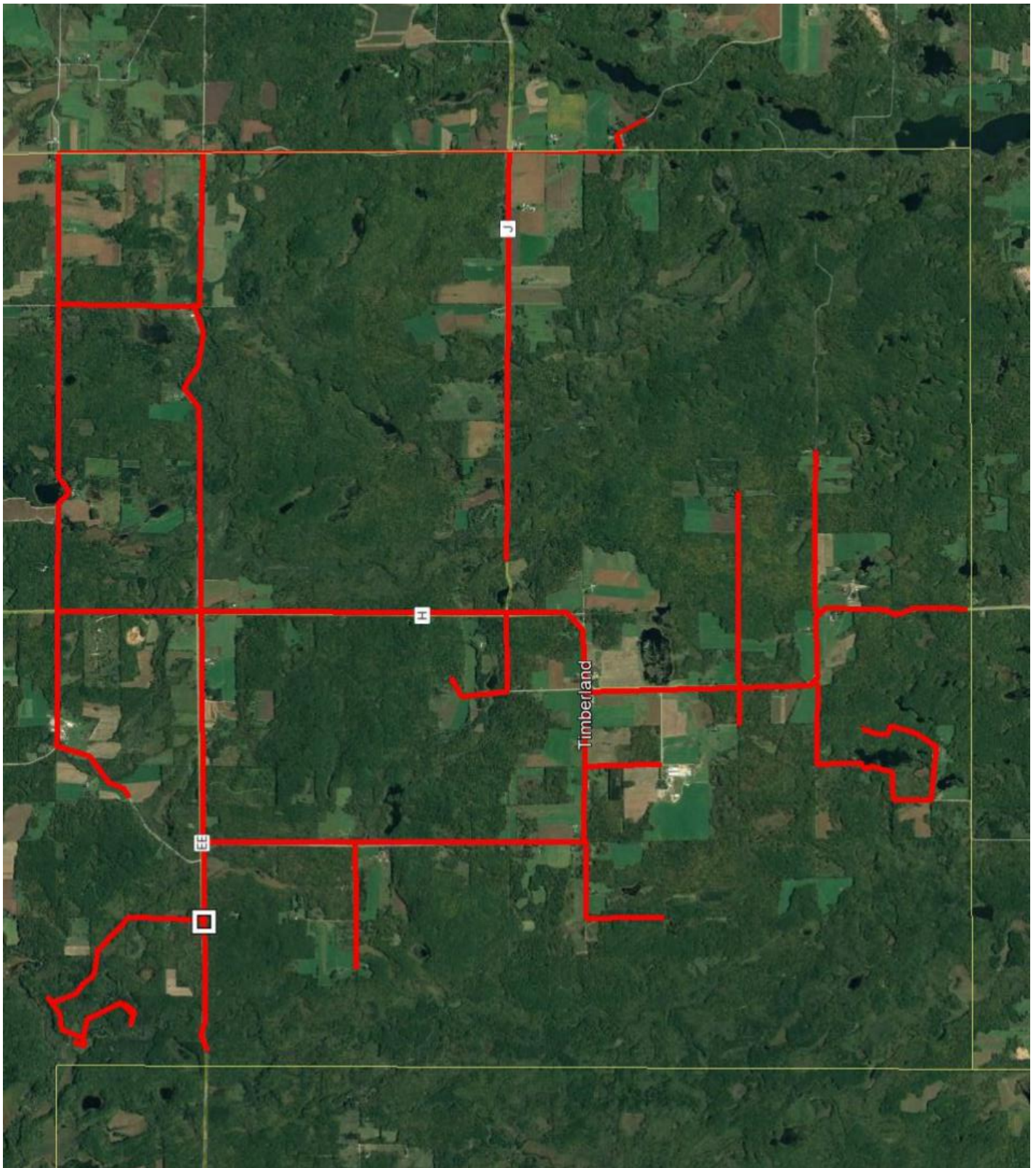
Budget

Line:	Description / Category:	Grant Funds:	Match:	Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$ 652,000.00	\$ 652,000.00	\$ 1,304,000.00
2	Equipment	\$ 148,000.00	\$ 148,000.00	\$ 296,000.00
3	Supplies			\$ -
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)			\$ -
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees			\$ -
6	Travel			\$ -
7	Other			\$ -
Total:		\$ 800,000.00	\$ 800,000.00	\$ 1,600,000.00
				50.0% match requested

Pledged Contributions

#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Starwire Technologies	Applicant	Cash	\$ 785,000.00
2	Town of Roosevelt	Partner	Cash	\$ 10,000.00
3	Burnett County	Partner	Cash	\$ 5,000.00
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total:				\$ 800,000.00

Red lines represent the proposed 40-mile fiber network for this application.



1. Executive Summary

This project proposes to build a 40-mile FTTH network which would bring broadband service to all residents in the Town of Roosevelt. The project will deliver a fiber optic connection directly to every home and business along the route, with plenty of spare capacity to expand in the future.

The only option currently available to these homes and businesses is slow and unreliable CenturyLink DSL. The proposed project area is vastly unserved from CenturyLink, as demonstrated by CenturyLink's own web site showing the lack of broadband service available. While a small number of locations in the project area show that broadband service is available, it rarely performs at broadband speeds and sometimes doesn't work at all. The fiber optic network would allow us to offer speeds of up to 1 gigabit, far surpassing the options currently available, and much faster than anything CenturyLink would be able to offer even if they were to upgrade their DSL infrastructure in the future.

Because of the beautiful "Up North" landscape that Burnett County provides, many tourists visit the area for camping, hiking, and other recreational activities. Every single resident and tourist would benefit from the project as it would allow more people to work from home, it would allow seasonal and weekend visitors to stay longer, and it would help children and college students do their homework and research without needing to drive to nearby villages just to get online. Awarding this grant would make many dreams come true that would otherwise be impossible.

2. Statement of applicant's ability to undertake the project

Starwire Technologies was founded in 2007 from an intense need for competition and reliable service in our rural areas. The service that the residents and businesses were receiving from the phone companies was unreliable and the customer service was horrible. Our goal and mission statement and the reason we exist is as follows: "We aim to raise the standard for customer service and better our community by providing a reliable high-speed Internet service to those who live in areas that are unserved or underserved." Starwire files Form 477 with the FCC to report data for both fixed-wireless and fiber deployments.

Since 2007 we have built a reliable fixed-wireless network consisting of over 50 towers and other broadcast points throughout Polk and Burnett Counties in Wisconsin and Pine County in Minnesota. We began constructing our first fiber network in 2017, and since then (and with the help of previous Broadband Grants) have constructed over 100 miles of mainline fiber. We look forward to continuing to expand the coverage of our fiber network. This grant will lay the groundwork for us to not only serve a community that is desperate, but will also position Starwire to continue to expand our fiber network in order to serve many more people.

Starwire received its first Broadband Expansion Grant from the PSC for FY2019 in the Town of Clam Falls. In FY2020, Starwire received a Phase 2 grant which more than doubled the size of the initial Clam Falls build. We also received a FY2020 CARES grant for portions of Clam Falls, and despite the short timeframe, the project was completed successfully and on-time. In FY 2021, we were awarded 3 additional grants, which continue to expand on the previous projects and are getting more people connected and online. And in the FY2022 ARPA grant cycle, we were awarded a phase 2 project in Indian Creek and parts of the Town of McKinley. All projects have completed construction on time, and the projects still under construction are all on track to be completed on time as well. We are very thankful and fortunate for these opportunities, and we hope we have shown the state that we can take on future projects by delivering exactly what we promised.

The opportunity to build a fiber optic network with the help of this grant will allow us to achieve our mission statement with greater ease. It is a pleasure for us to be able to say that around 90% of our customers are sent to us by referrals. In the small-town setting where we are located, that is a major accomplishment and something to be proud of. Our reputation is what this company is built on. We don't think about providing service to customers identified by an account number. The people who use our service are our neighbors, our friends, and our families. We know that we are going to run into these people in town, and when we do, we want to know that they are happy with the service we provide to them.

Part of our goal is to be open and honest with our customers. It's about taking the time to help them find the source of any issue, whether it really is an issue with their service or something on their end and helping to find the correct solution. It's about knowing how to calm the frustrations when they have been treated poorly by another provider and expressing to them that we care about them.

We have spent a lot of time planning this grant with the mindset of providing the best value to the taxpayers as possible. Every bit of engineering has been based on making sure that the network is very reliable and can grow to meet all of the future needs, while also making sure that it is carefully designed to be efficient and not waste any money.

3. Statement of need for high-speed, reliable, and affordable broadband

CenturyLink is the only wireline provider in the project area. There are no fixed wireless providers. Cell phone service where it is available is not a suitable replacement for a reliable and consistent home/business internet service. Further, we could find no evidence of any providers who plan to build and offer 100mbps service.

The proposed project area is vastly underserved from CenturyLink, as demonstrated by CenturyLink's own web site showing the lack of broadband service available. CenturyLink offers a fairly flat rate of approximately \$50/mo regardless of what speed they can provide. We checked many addresses within the proposed project area on CenturyLink's web site, and around 10% of addresses were listed as being offered less than 5mbps. Approximately 70% of the addresses were listed as receiving 10mbps, and the remaining 20% only over 10mbps available. Feedback from all CenturyLink customers regardless of the speed they are purchasing is that the actual delivered speed is quite often much lower than advertised, especially during evening hours or during bad weather. Therefore, we conclude that much of the area should be classified as unserved as no provider is currently offering reliable broadband service. While enough for some basic functions for a single person, the speeds currently available are not adequate for most bandwidth intensive applications, or families of people all trying to use the same connection at once.

Our completed projects have shown that bringing better broadband internet service to the area allows tourists to spend more time visiting the area, which has helped support the local economy. Many of the people who travel to the area live in the Twin Cities and are required to have fast and reliable access for their work. Better internet access availability allows tourist to frequent the area more often and for longer periods of time.

A large portion of the population is made up of cabin folks. Not only would more people choose to make these cabins their full-time homes, but those who are seasonal or weekend visitors would be able to spend full weeks or extended weekends in the area, instead of having to leave sooner to go back home for work. That money goes directly into the local economy which supports our local restaurants, grocery stores, and shops. We witnessed this firsthand during the Covid-19 pandemic. Those who couldn't get a reliable connection were

forced to stay out of the area because travel was higher risk, while those who did have broadband spent the entire summer in the area, and some simply sold their city house and moved here full time.

Fiber to the home increases the value of homes, improving the real estate market. Homes will increase in monetary value, plus having fast and reliable broadband service available will attract many potential buyers who may otherwise choose to live in a different area due to their reliance on broadband connectivity. It has been shown time and time again that having fiber to the home is beneficial to economic development in many ways.

The awarding of this grant will have a large affect in changing the dynamics of who chooses to spend time and live in this area. Right now, the population is made up largely of baby boomers and upper end of Generation X, which means most of the recent graduates in the area are about to move out of town, or already have. Having access to "the world" at a speed in which Millennials have grown to expect will invite them to stay, to telecommute, to shop from home, or take that online class that isn't offered at the local school. It will help keep people with wonderful talent in our area, to develop new businesses, and create new jobs.

What we are doing here is not just providing faster 1's and 0's, we are actually improving lives. We are giving folks the ability to stay closer to their parents to help care for them in their aging conditions without having to sacrifice a higher paying job to do so. We are allowing the child on the brink of adulthood the opportunity to take "that class", because without a reliable Internet source, they would have to move to campus, but the family can't afford it.

The lack of any reliable broadband service is also a serious health care issue. If improved internet access were available, it would allow the disabled and aging population to stay in their homes longer and receive better home health care. They will have the ability to utilize medical devices which communicate with health care providers about their medications and will allow them to call for help in the case of an emergency.

The lack of broadband service not only affects work and health care access, it also has negatively affected kids in school. Kids are now being armed with Chromebooks and iPads, and parents are currently unable to purchase suitable internet access for their kids to do their homework. This often means late trips to town (which can mean a 10+ mile trip one way) in search of a WI-FI connection, often done from a not so comfortable car in an establishment's parking lot. Bringing fast and reliable internet service to the area will enable both kids and college students access to learning materials from home, allowing them to complete their schoolwork from their own home.

To stress the importance of this point, we highly encourage everyone reading this application to take 5 minutes to check out the following link: www.starwire.net/homework – which will redirect to a YouTube video that really gives a great example and perspective on the difference having internet access at home makes for kids trying to do homework, or just learn in general.

Lastly, this project will create jobs for the construction of the network and will continue to support additional jobs after construction in order to support the network and its continued expansion.

4. Project Proposal

a. Technology and network design

The proposed project will use Gigabit Passive Optical Network (GPON) technologies to deploy a Fiber to the Home (FTTH) network to the businesses and residents in the proposed project area. This technology is capable of delivering dedicated broadband speeds to every home and business, with the highest reliability and the lowest latency of any other technology. This network allows us to offer Gigabit speed internet services, as demonstrated by the thousands of providers who have chosen GPON as their fiber network technology.

Through our experience deploying fiber to the home, it has been proven that a fiber optic network is the most desired form of Internet delivery to provide fast speeds and high reliability! The fiber also allows for the potential of future services such as telephone and television that could be provided over the same network, or through a lease to other providers utilizing the dark fiber available. The technology can surpass the current needs of broadband internet today and provide a solid long-term investment that can meet the future needs as well.

This project is an extension of our previously awarded projects, demonstrating that we planned appropriately to scale the scope of that project to new areas. As with our other fiber projects, we have engineered and built this GPON network to deliver dedicated bandwidth to each customer, while allowing the system to be expanded to cover new areas once the proposed project area has been completed. Extra fiber will continue to be installed as part of this proposed project to accommodate installing service on every road within the project area without impacting the service of any existing subscribers.

The proposed project would bring service to all of the homes and businesses along the proposed route, but the groundwork will have been laid to expand the service to additional areas simply by continuing to extend the fiber optic cables that would be installed, if this grant were awarded. This network can also be extended into nearby townships who face the same issues with poor or non-existent internet service.

In addition to the future area that this network is capable of covering, the infrastructure can provide other services as well. Increased speeds that can be offered is one of the big factors in choosing fiber optic technology, but given the fact that phone service is unreliable, and the terrain makes receiving television signals difficult, both of those services are being considered to increase the impact of the proposed project.

The only infrastructure that exists is old copper phone cables, thus CenturyLink is not able to reliably offer broadband services to most areas. This grant will bring MUCH faster speeds than what CenturyLink can currently offer or would be able to offer even with the fastest DSL technologies. In addition, there is currently no competition, so residents don't have a choice of providers.

b. Affordability, digital literacy, and internet access

Our pricing is very straightforward. There are no hidden fees or surprises for our customers. None of our plans have any caps. Current pricing is as follows:

- 100/100 for \$68/mo
- 200/200 for \$88/mo
- 300/300 for \$108/mo
- 500/500 for \$148/mo
- 1000/1000 for \$248/mo

Rather than get involved with the red tape and overhead of dealing with the federal discount programs, we have decided to offer our own discount to customers who need it. Any customer who expresses financial hardship is given multiple assistance options. One simple option is a payment plan for those who just need more time to pay. Another option is a 50% discounted monthly rate for 6 months, at which time the need for the discount is re-evaluated. We find this is much simpler for us and our customers as we do not need to have staff members spend extra time with reporting, and our customers do not need to fill out any applications.

5. Partnerships and community engagement

The proposed project includes multiple partners.

The Town of Roosevelt has joined us as a public partner and will be contributing \$10,000 to the project through a resolution passed by the town board of supervisors. This is still a significant investment as the town has chosen to spend ALL of their ARPA funds through this partnership. That resolution is included later in the application.

Burnett County passed a resolution contributing \$5,000 in cash towards the project. The letter from the county is included at the end of this application. In addition, Burnett County is working to become a Broadband Forward Community and is sending letters to all towns within the county encouraging them to do the same.

Through the multiple partnerships, you can see that the entire community has come together to support this project.

6. Timeline

If Starwire is awarded the grant for the proposed project, work would start immediately to secure the remaining materials for the project. Since lead times are quite long for many materials, sometimes approaching a full year, we are working with our vendors and contractors to pre-order as many materials as possible in anticipation of the project. Completion of this project will be dependent on the arrival of materials, but will be finished within the performance period of the grant.

7. Budget Discussion

Starwire Technologies will be making a significant investment into this project. All of the fiber, outside plant, and other networking components will be owned and operated by Starwire Technologies. The grant funds will not subsidize Starwire's operating costs and will be used solely for the construction and associated costs of this project. The grant funds will be used for the sole purpose of constructing a fiber to the home network to the unserved and underserved areas in the proposed project area.

8. Evaluation Criteria at a Glance

To make things easier for the panel reviewing applications, we are adding this section to quickly and briefly describe how this application addresses each of the scoring criteria laid out in the instructions:

a. Matching funds (10 points). An application will receive higher priority based on the percentage of matching funds the applicant proposes to invest in its project and the variety of sources of matching funding provided by partners and others.

Starwire and its partners will contribute 50% of the cost of the project.

b. Public-private partnerships (10 points). An application that includes a city, village, town, or county as a participating partner, in partnership with a telecommunication provider or other private organization and exhibits active community engagement shall receive priority.

This project has 2 public partners: Burnett County and the Town of Roosevelt.

c. Existing broadband service (15 points). An application proposing to serve an unserved area shall receive priority. The priority will be based on the percent of the project that reaches unserved location.

Screenshots taken from CenturyLink's web site shows that around 20% of the area can receive more than 10mbps. Around 70% is listed as receiving 10mbps, and the other 10% receiving only 5mbps or less. However the speed is an "up to" speed, and according to reports from residents, many times those on 10mbps cannot maintain over 5mbps when it is needed most, leading us to consider the majority of the area is actually unserved. We estimate only 20% of the application area is offered speeds above 10mbps, therefore we would consider that 80% of the project area is unserved.

d. Project impact (15 points). An application that proposes to serve a larger geographic area, a larger number of customers or communities in an area or provide a higher performance service shall receive higher priority than one that serves a comparatively smaller geographic area, fewer number of potential customers or communities in an area or slower service as compared with the cost of the project.

This project focuses on 100% coverage throughout the Town of Roosevelt. This is a large geographic area and covers 40 road miles.

e. Scalability (5 points). An application that demonstrates a commitment to increase the size or scope of its broadband network in the future shall receive priority. An application that discusses possible growth potential, but declines to make a specific commitment regarding future growth of the broadband network, shall receive a lesser priority.

The project will install enough spare capacity to enable the scope of this project to be expanding in the future as we have demonstrated with each of our previously awarded grants, all of which built off of each other and made expansion to new areas possible without reinvesting in areas that have already received funding.

f. Economic development (10 points). An application that demonstrates the potential to promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region shall receive priority.

With the need to support “work from home” jobs, this application excels by proving ample speeds to meet and exceed the needs of remote workers, as well as those who have home-based businesses. The lack of broadband has prevented home sales and business growth, and this project would fix both of those issues for the areas we plan to serve.

g. Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas (5 points). An application that demonstrates that it will not impair the ability of a competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project shall receive priority.

This application fills in the gaps between broadband providers and completes coverage throughout the town without impairing any other provider from naturally expanding their footprint in other areas.

We feel the above answers to each scoring criteria demonstrates that we have addressed each category of evaluation and that the application deserves most or all points in each category.

Resolution #2022-1

STATE OF WISCONSIN
Town of Roosevelt
Burnett County

**ROOSEVELT TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESOLUTION TO APPROVE BROADBAND
EXPANSION PROPOSAL FROM STARWIRE TECHNOLOGIES**

WHEREAS, Roosevelt Township (the "Township") strives for expansion of fiber optic broadband infrastructure and service available to its residents;

WHEREAS, Starwire Technologies ("Starwire") is a provider of broadband services to the area in or around the Township;

WHEREAS, Starwire presented a proposal for expansion of broadband services in the Township (the "Starwire Proposal") at a Township board meeting on January 11, 2022. The Starwire Proposal shall be part of a Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) Broadband Expansion Grant submitted as part of the FY2022 grant cycle.

WHEREAS, the Starwire Proposal sets forth a Township contribution of \$10,000 in American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA") funds, and such contribution assumes additional funds will be provided by a Starwire contribution and grant award funds.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Wis. Stat 65.90(5)(a), the Township board must approve the Township contribution of \$10,000 set forth in the Starwire Proposal by a 2/3 member vote. Execution of the Starwire Proposal will be dependent upon successful award of the respective PSC Broadband Expansion Grant.

WHEREAS, the Township Board reviewed and discussed the contents of this resolution and the Township Board determined that it is in the best interest of the Township to commit Township funds in the amount of \$10,000 in ARPA funds and approve the Starwire Proposal based on the conditions detailed below.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Township Board determines the following:

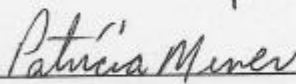
1. Recitals. The Recitals set forth above are true and correct and are hereby incorporated into this Resolution.
2. Public Partnership. The Township board's approval of this resolution solidifies the Township as a public partner for the PSC Broadband Expansion Grant described in the Starwire Proposal.

3. Approval of Starwire Proposal; Conditions. The Township Board hereby approves the Starwire Proposal and commits \$10,000 in ARPA funds to the broadband expansion project with the following conditions:
 - a. The broadband expansion project must be completed to the PSC's satisfaction, which is determined by approval of the final reimbursement to Starwire by the PSC grant funds.
4. Health, Welfare and Safety. The Township Board's approval of this Resolution and the Starwire Proposal is beneficial to the health, welfare and safety of the Township's resident, taxpayers, and visitors.

The content of this Resolution was reviewed and discussed as the Township meeting on February 8, 2022, and voted to recommend that the Township Board of supervisors to approve.



Lee Huber
Roosevelt Township Chairman



Patricia Miner
Roosevelt Township Clerk



OFFICE OF THE
**Burnett County Development
Association**

County Government Center
7410 County Road K, #120
Siren, WI 54872

**Richard Hartmann
Economic
Development Director**

Phone: 715-349-2979
Cell 715-566-0021

February 23, 2022

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
North Towner, Sixth Floor
Hills Farm State Office Building
4822 North Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53706

RE: Letter of Support for a Broadband Expansion Grant: Starwire Technologies
P.O. Box 428 - Siren, WI 54872

To Whom It May Concern:

The Burnett County Administrator along with the County Economic Development Director and fiduciary for the Burnett County Development Association (a non-profit development organization that assists in creating economic opportunities for residents, businesses and communities within the county), have as a high priority, the establishment and expansion of high speed broadband services for all county residents. They fully support Starwire Technologies, LLC efforts in submitting a Wisconsin Public Service Commission Broadband Expansion Grant application for the benefit of portions of Burnett County in Roosevelt Township.

The Town of Roosevelt is in dire need of adequate, reliable, secure, and fairly priced fiber optic broadband service. Their current providers are not able to provide service to all members of the Town and those who have service are in need of adequate speeds and more reliable service.

Accessible, reliable, high speed, secure broadband is critical to support multiple facets within the Township. This has never been more critically important than now with the advent of the covid-19 pandemic. Our businesses need readily accessible high speed, reliable and secure internet service in order to operate, expand and remain competitive. Our schools require that their students need a reliable connection with fast down and up load speeds to attain the required knowledge and skills to complete their educational requirements. Medical and health care providers in Burnett County would be able to allow for more efficient communication and treatment of their patients, especially for critical care needs. This is particularly true in our rural unserved and underserved areas such as Roosevelt Township and again, now even more so due to the covid-19 virus.

Another important aspect for expanding and improving broadband here is the increased demand from teleworkers for high speed, reliable, secure and competitively priced internet that is easily accessed. Burnett County, borders the State of Minnesota and is in close proximity to the Twin Cities (Minneapolis/St. Paul) metro area. This geographical advantage coupled with

the fact that the county has abundant natural resources with its numerous lakes, streams and forests has a great number of second home owners who recreate here. Being only an hour and half from the metro area many of these home owners have upgraded their seasonal homes into year-round residences and are working here, due to the pandemic.

A good portion of these people own businesses all requiring good internet services. The broadband expansion areas that Starwire, LLC is applying for include: an unserved and underserved portion of Roosevelt Township. This project is "Green." Telecommuting will help conserve fuel and lessen emissions due to reduced driving.

In addition to this Letter of Support the Burnett County Development Association (BCDA) is willing to partner with Starwire Technologies, LLC on this project and has agreed to commit \$5,000 to the project pending grant approval. Burnett County is one of the poorer counties in the state and we see an investment in expanded broadband as a key piece of our economic and infrastructure development to grow our economy and personal incomes. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Nate Ehalt,
Burnett County Administrator



Richard F. Hartmann,
Burnett County Economic Development

TOWN OF ROOSEVELT
BURNETT COUNTY, WI

Patricia Miner-Clerk
2997 County Rd EE
Shell Lake, WI 54871

February 8, 2022

Public Service Commission
610 North Whitney Way
Madison, WI 53707

To whom it may concern,

The Town of Roosevelt, Burnett County, Wisconsin, is sending this letter of support for the broadband expansion grant application for Starwire Technologies. Representatives from Starwire Technology attended our January Town Board meeting, and explained what they have to offer as far as internet speeds, monthly pricing of their packages, and what is involved in order for our Township to be eligible for consideration. All residents in attendance, as well as the board members gave their full attention, as there is no current service available in our area that has shown any effort to improving internet service to our area.

Expansion of broadband service has been a topic from the local to national level in recent years, but from the service provider perspective, we are aware that our Township would not be as appealing to invest in as we have no trend of population growth, business development or other investment in infrastructure within the Town. That being said, our residents have the same aspirations for adequate internet connectivity speeds as any other population. We have many residents who conduct a substantial amount of work from their homes, and a number of students who would greatly benefit from improved internet services. This need has only been accentuated by pandemic constraints, which has led to even more reliance on internet to keep students, families and employees connected to their everyday lives.

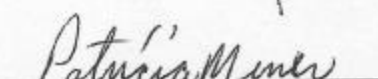
As a result, our Board has elected to both support and partner with Starwire Technologies on this project. While we have a very limited budget, this is a subject that we feel all of our residents will be supportive of, and have agreed to contribute \$10,000 to the project upon substantial completion as we believe it will benefit our Town for years to come.

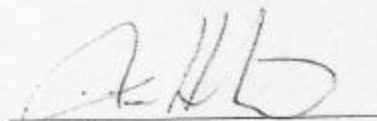
We urge you to consider our perspective on this matter. We represent a municipality that likely does not show a significant return on investment from a service provider who would choose to expand services to our residents. This may be the best, or only, opportunity our residents have to improve our internet services within the Town in the near future. We respectfully request that our population, lack of business development and lack of recreational destinations be taken into account as you select the projects that will most greatly impact the residents of Wisconsin.

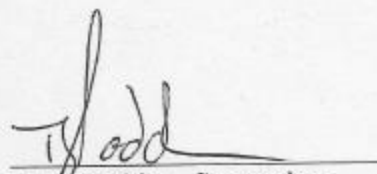
We hope that our willingness to invest in this project is demonstrative of our desire to see the opportunity come to fruition for our residents.


Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We hope to be a partner in a project that will impact the lives of all residents of the Town of Roosevelt.

Respectfully,


Patricia Miner, Clerk


Lee Huber, Chairman



Tyler Odden, Supervisor


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